

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 /026 W
-----026991 312200Z /61

Z O 312110Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 4545

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT FLASH

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM FLASH

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 9718

EXDIS - CAIRO FOR AMB ATHERTON

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI PORG UNSC LE IS

SUBJ: MEETING WITH WEIZMAN ON CURRENT SITUATION IN S LEBANON

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 9715, (B) BEIRUT 4344

1. AT MY REQUEST I HAD AN URGENT MEETING WITH WEIZMAN AT HIS OFFICE THIS EVENING WHICH LASTED A HOUR AND A QUARTER. WEIZMAN HAD DEPUTY MINDEF ZIPPORI, COS EITAN, ACTING DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE SAGI, COL TEHILA AND EITAN'S EXECUTIVE OFFICER LT COL BIRAN WITH HIM. I WAS ACCOMPANIED BY POLCOUNS BLACKWILL AND ARMA WILLIAMS. MY INITIAL PURPOSE WAS TO STRONGLY EXPRESS CONCERN THAT MY COMMUNICATION WITH WEIZMAN HAD BEEN LESS THAN SATISFACTORY DURING THE PAST 72 HOURS. I SAID THAT WE HAD RECEIVED WORRISOME SUGGESTIONS TODAY THAT ISRAEL WAS MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN S. LEBANON THAN WEIZMAN HAD LED ME TO BELIEVE. I THEN READ MOST OF BEIRUT 4344 TO THE GROUP, AND TOLD WEIZMAN THAT THIS REPORT RAISED
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THE GREATEST QUESTION ABOUT ISRAELI ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS. GOI INVOLVEMENT IN LEBANON WOULD INEVITABLY AFFECT BROADER POLICY ISSUES, INCLUDING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH ARE OF GREAT CONCERN TO ALL OF US. I NOTED I WANTED NO MISUNDERSTANDING ON THIS MATTER. WHAT WAS ISRAEL DOING IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHY, AND HOW COULD WE GET THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO TIBNIN WITHOUT FURTHER CONFRONTATION?

2. AFTER MY BLUNT BEGINNING, DURING WHICH WEIZMAN LOST HIS USUAL SMILE, HE SAID THAT THE GOI HAS GOOD INTELLIGENCE THAT THE MOVEMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY ON THE CHOSEN ROUTE THROUGH MARJUYUN IS A PLOT ENGINEERED BY THE SYRIANS, TOGETHER WITH THE GOL, TO TAKE OVER THE ENCLAVES, TO GET RID OF HADDAD, AND TO INTERFERE WITH THE GOOD FENCE. SEVERAL TIMES HE INSISTED THAT THE GOOD OFFICES OF THE US WERE BEING USED "INNOCENTLY" TO ASSIST IN THIS TAKEOVER. HE SAID THE LEBANESE FORCES CONSISTED OF 700, NOT 500, SOLDIERS (SOME OF WHICH MAY BE REALLY SYRIANS IN LAF UNIFORM), ESCORTED BY A SYRIAN COMPANY, AND THAT ANOTHER LEBANESE COMPANY IS EN ROUTE TO JOIN THE INITIAL FORCE TONIGHT. GOI INTELLIGENCE, WHICH SAGI DESCRIBED AS "OF CONSIDERABLY HIGH BUT NOT THE HIGHEST DEGREE OF RELIABILITY," INDICATES THAT THE PLAN IS TO DROP OFF TROOPS IN MARJUYUN AND AL QULAYAH AS THEY PASS THROUGH, THUS UNDERMINING HADDAD AND TAKING OVER THE ENCLAVE. INDEED, A VISITING NORWEGIAN CHIEF OF STAFF HAD TOLD ZIPPORI LAST FRIDAY (AFTER MY TALK WITH WEIZMAN) THAT GENERAL KHOURI HAD SAID DURING LEBANESE-NORWEGIAN TALKS IN BEIRUT THAT INTENT OF LAF MOVEMENT SOUTH WAS TO OCCUPY ENCLAVES. (NO ISRAELI BOTHERED TO TELL US THIS UNTIL TONIGHT.) WEIZMAN ALSO SAID THAT ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THE LEBANESE ARMY HAS ORDERS TO OPEN FIRE AND FORCE THEIR WAY THROUGH HADDAD TOMORROW.

3. AFTER CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION OF THE SITUATION, DURING
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WHICH I REPEATEDLY STRESSED THE FUNDAMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF GETTING A LEBANESE FORCE SOUTH OF THE LITANI, WEIZMAN ARRIVED AT THE FOLLOWING PROPOSAL:

- A. THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE HALT IN PLACE AND MAKE NO ATTEMPT TO MOVE FORCEABLY INTO THE ENCLAVE AREA.
- B. NEGOTIATIONS COMMENCE TOMORROW DIRECTED TOWARD ARRIVING AT A SATISFACTORY TECHNIQUE OF MOVING THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE TO TIBNIN, WHICH WEIZMAN INSISTED HE STILL SUPPORTED. WEIZMAN INITIALLY INSISTED ON A NABATIYAH ROUTE WHICH I POINTED OUT WOULD BE A HUMILIATION TO THE GOL AND THE ARMY, AS WELL AS UNSAFE. WEIZMAN FELL BACK AND AGREED THAT SOME NON-THREATENING ALTERNATIVE, SUCH AS MOVING THE FORCE THROUGH IN SMALL GROUPS ESCORTED BY UNIFIL WITH FLAGS FLYING, SHOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.
- C. NO LEBANESE ARMY TROOPS WOULD BE LEFT BEHIND IN MARJUYUN OR AL QULAYAH OR AL KHIYAM.
- D. NO FURTHER ATTEMPTS WOULD BE MADE TO UNDERMINE HADDAD OR TO TRY TO RELIEVE HIM AT THIS POINT. WEIZMAN DID RECOGNIZE THAT THE PROBLEM OF HADDAD MUST EVENTUALLY BE SOLVED, BUT A SOLUTION SUCH AS THAT BROUGHT BY LT HOMSI IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO HADDAD OR TO ANYONE ELSE IN HIS ENCLAVE.
- E. THE ISRAELIS WILL EXERT PRESSURE ON HADDAD NOT TO

ENGAGE THE LEBANESE ARMY FORCE, WHICH IN TURN MUST HOLD ITS FIRE.

F. THE SYRIAN COMPANY WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE LEBANESE ARMY
FORCE MUST IMMEDIATELY RETURN TO KAHR MISHKI.

4. I SAID THAT THIS SOLUTION APPEARS TO BE A RATIONAL
POSITION AT THIS TIME FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW AND HOPED
THAT NEGOTIATIONS COULD START AS SOON AS POSSIBLE,
RESULTING IN THE LEBANESE ARMY AND FLAG IN TIBNIN.

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM FLASH
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
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EXDIS - CAIRO FOR AMB ATHERTON

5. HOWEVER, EVEN IF THIS IS ACHIEVED, WE ARE FAR FROM BEING
OUT OF THE WOODS, FOR WEIZMAN AND COMPANY HAVE SEVERE
RESERVATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF THE MARJUYUN ROUTE AS A
LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS EVEN IF SOME TECHNIQUE IS WORKED
OUT TO GET THE PRESENT FORCE IN. THEY BELIEVE THAT
"THE PLOT" WOULD BE TO CONTINUALLY UNDERMINE HADDAD,
USING THE LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS AS A SABOTAGE
AND PROPAGANDA AVENUE. THEY INSIST THAT THE NABATIYAH ROUTE
CAN BE OPENED. THEY ALSO INSIST THAT THE REJECTIONISTS,
AS WELL AS FATAH, HAVE CONCURRED IN THE MOVEMENT OF
THE LEBANESE ARMY SOUTH AND THUS THE REJECTIONISTS DO
NOT POSE A THREAT ON THE NABATIYAH ROUTE. I SAID THIS
WAS NEWS TO US AND THAT OUR INFORMATION DID NOT SUPPORT
REJECTIONIST CONCURRENCE WITH THE MOVEMENT.

6. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE DISCUSSION WHEN I USED REFTEL B AS A VEHICLE TO EXPRESS MY CONCERN ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN US, WEIZMAN DENIED
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NOTHING SUBSTANTIVE CONCERNING THE MEETINGS BETWEEN GEN BEN GAL (YANNOSH) AND LT HOMSI. HE DID DENY IDF PARTICIPATION IN ESTABLISHING MINE FIELDS. AFTER SOME HESITATION AND DISCUSSION IN HEBREW WITH THE CHIEF OF STAFF, WEIZMAN SAID UNQUIVOCALLY THAT HADDAD HAD ESTABLISHED THE MINE FIELD. (NEWLIN TELLS ME HIS UN CONTACTS ALSO BELIEVE HADDAD'S MEN LAID THE MINES.)

7. WEIZMAN THEN ISSUED TWO THREATS. THE FIRST REFERS TO FLIGHTS IN THE AREA BY LEBANESE HAWKER HUNTER AIRCRAFT. NOTING THAT TWO HAD FLOWN IN THE AREA TODAY AND THAT THE IDF HAS SOME INTELLIGENCE THAT THERE IS INTENT TO "USE THEM IN A HOSTILE, STRAFING ACTION TOMORROW," HE WARNED, "WE WILL SHOOT THEM DOWN IF THEY STRAFE." THE SECOND THREAT CONCERNED ANY DROP-OFF OF LEBANESE ARMY IN THE MARJUYUN AREA WHICH WOULD RESULT IN HADDAD BEING THREATENED. "IF SOME STAY BEHIND, WE MAY WALK IN." I INSISTED THAT THE LAST THING ANYONE NEEDS IS A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE IDF AND ANYONE ELSE AND URGED THAT HE KEEP HIS POWDER DRY. WEIZMAN REMINDED ME THAT SOME OF HIS SOLDIERS -- AND HE POINTED AT CHIEF OF STAFF EITAN -- AREN'T HAPPY WITH THE SITUATION AND THAT HE MUST LISTEN TO THE ADVICE OF HIS SOLDIERS EVEN IF THEY TAKE HIS ORDERS. EITAN'S EXPRESSION AND TERSE COMMENTS, ALL IN HEBREW, ILLUSTRATED HIS DISLIKE OF THE SITUATION.

8. COMMENT: WE ARE IN A SITUATION WHERE THE INTELLIGENCE AVAILABLE TO WEIZMAN HAS LED HIM TO THE CONCLUSION THAT HE AND HADDAD HAVE BEEN DOUBLE-CROSSED, AND THAT AT BEST THE U.S. HAD BEEN DUPED. WE ARE NOT GOING TO DISSUADE HIM OF THIS BELIEF. HOWEVER, IF WE CAN ACCOMPLISH THE
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STEPS OUTLINED ABOVE WHICH CAN RESULT IN THE MOVE OF LAF FORCES INTO TIBNIN WITHOUT STAYING BEHIND ELSEWHERE, THE MARJUYUN HURDLE MAY BE OVER. THE PROBLEM OF THE LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND OF WHAT TO DO ABOUT HADDAD WILL REMAIN.

9. ADDENDUM: WEIZMAN PHONED ME AT THE EMBASSY AT 11:15 PM,

JULY 31, SAYING HE HAD TALKED TO HADDAD. HADDAD IS PREPARED TO COOPERATE IN THE SCENARIO OUTLINED ABOVE IF REPEAT IF HIS APPOINTMENT TO HIS LEBANESE ARMY COMMAND IS REINSTATED. HE SAYS HE CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO CONTROL HIS FORCES IF HE HAS NO COMMAND AUTHORITY. I TOLD WEIZMAN I COULD NOT IMAGINE THE GOL THUS REWARDING HADDAD FOR HAVING FIRED ON ITS TROOPS, BUT THAT I WOULD PASS ON HIS STATEMENT. I TOLD WEIZMAN THAT HE HAD TO CONTROL HADDAD AND WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO DO SO, REGARDLESS OF HADDAD'S FORMAL MILITARY STATUS. HE SAID HE WOULD TRY. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, MEETINGS, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV09718
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780313-0780
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978071/aaaaabev.tel
Line Count: 234
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1e32c06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 9715, 78 BEIRUT 4344
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1843579
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH WEIZMAN ON CURRENT SITUATION IN S LEBANON
TAGS: MILI, PORG, LE, IS, UNSC, (WEIZMAN, EZER)
To: STATE BEIRUT
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1e32c06a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014